

DISCUSSION OF THE AMENDMENT

Claims 1 and 6 have each been amended to recite that the heater rack is disposed in the furnace, as supported in the specification at, for example, Fig. 8 and page 17, lines 10-17.

New Claims 27 and 28 have been added. Claim 27 recites that the second group of a plurality of heating elements are mounted on the heating rack in a direction generally parallel to the direction of the at least one glass sheet as it moves through the furnace, as supported in the specification at, for example, the Figures collectively. Claim 28 is supported in the specification at, for example, Figs. 6 and 8 and page 15, line 27 through page 16, line 18 and page 17, lines 10-17.

No new matter is believed to have been added by the above amendment. Claims 1-28 are now pending in the application. Claims 1-5, 11-13, 17, 18, 21, 23, 24, 27 and 28 are active; Claims 6-10, 14-16, 19, 20, 22, 25 and 26 stand withdrawn from consideration.

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesy extended to Applicants' attorney during the interview held May 9, 2007, in the above-identified application. During the interview, Applicants' attorney explained the presently-claimed invention and why it is patentable over the applied prior art, and discussed other issues raised in the Office Action. The discussion is summarized and expanded upon below.

The rejections of Claims 1-4, 11-12, 17 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over, GB 836560 (GB '560); Claim 23 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over GB '560; and Claims 5, 13, 18 and 21 over GB '560 in view of U.S. 6,347,535 (Kamata), are respectfully traversed.

In response to arguments made by Applicants in the previous amendment, the Examiner finds at page 7 of the Office Action that, in effect, "a support housing assembly comprised of bracket 98 mounted with axle rods 96, pulley element 92 and cable element 91 for mounting a pair of heaters 88" of GB '560 reads on the presently-recited heater rack.

As Applicants previously replied, and continue to maintain, even if such a support housing assembly could be termed a heater rack, each of these assemblies contains, as the Examiner admits, a pair of heaters 88. Rather, and as the Examiner agreed during the above-referenced interview, the apparatus of GB '560 contains a plurality of such assemblies as a glass sheet moves from the tunnel-like Lehr thereof, wherein each pair of heaters 88 are located in a direction transverse to the direction of the glass sheet through the Lehr. In other words, focusing on Figs. 3 and 10 in GB '560, GB '560 can be characterized as disclosing a multitude of heating racks, each heating rack containing a pair of heaters 88, and each heating rack and each pair of heaters being located transverse to the direction of the glass sheet through the Lehr.

In addition, the heater rack of the present invention, even before the above-discussed amendment, is recited as being movable. In GB '560, on the other hand, bracket 98, axle rod 96 and pulley element 92 are all fixed.

Referring to the limitation that the heating rack comprises five or more heating elements, the Examiner points to Fig. 10 of GB '560 as showing multiple pairs of heating elements 88, which the Examiner finds meets this limitation. However, as discussed above, such **multiple** pairs correspond to **multiple** support housing assemblies, and thus, **multiple** heating racks, to the extent such an assembly could be termed a heating rack.

Nor without the present disclosure as a guide would one skilled in the art increase the number of heaters 88 for each support housing assembly. Nevertheless, even if one skilled in the art were to do so, these heaters would be mounted transverse to the direction of the glass sheet through the lehr.

At any rate, the issue is now moot in view of the above-discussed amendment to Claim 1, which requires that the presently-recited heating rack be disposed in the furnace. In GB '560, on the other hand, and as Applicants' attorney pointed out to the Examiner during the above-referenced interview, the support housing assembly of bracket 98, axle rod 96 and pulley element 92 of GB '560 are all fixed outside of the lehr of GB '560, which assembly communicates with heaters 88 through slots in the lehr ceiling.

Nor would it have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to mount the support housing assembly of GB '560 inside the lehr thereof. As is well-known, and as described in the specification herein, the inside of a bending furnace is usually heated up to about 600°C, and it is apparent that the heater rack of the present invention must be made of a heat-resistant material. The bracket 98, axle rod 96 and pulley element 92 of GB '560 are disposed outside of the lehr, as discussed above, where the temperature is generally at room temperature, and thus the materials for making these parts do not require heat resistance.

Clearly, to locate the support housing assembly of GB '560 inside the lehr thereof would require different materials, with the added expense that would entail.

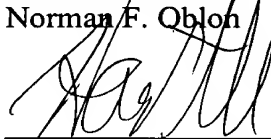
Kamata does not remedy any of the above-discussed deficiencies in GB '560.

For all the above reasons, it is respectfully requested that the rejections over prior art be withdrawn.

All of the presently-pending claims in this application are now believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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